



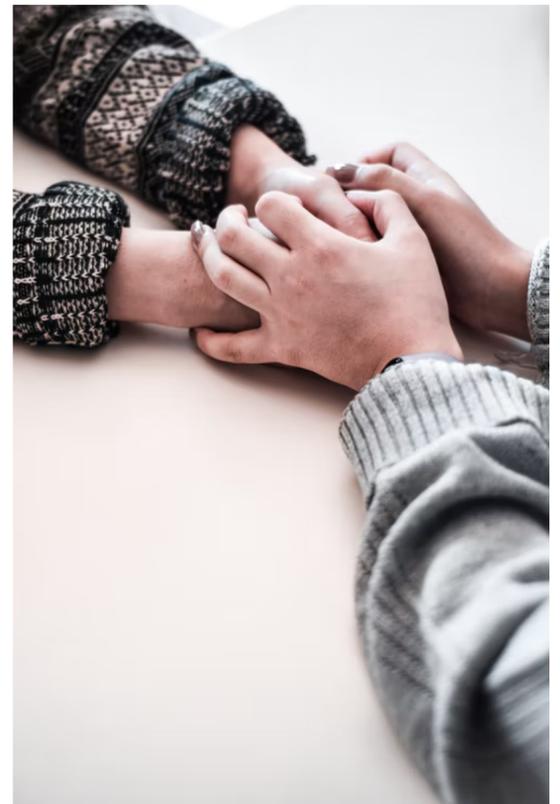
Understanding Emotions

It is really important that we embed an understanding of emotions to our children. This will then provide them with the skills to begin to recognise their feelings and in turn regulate them.

Research shows that children who understand their emotions are able to form stronger friendships, calm themselves quickly when they are upset, perform better in school, have fewer negative thoughts and can regulate emotions. Therefore, it is vital we embed this understanding in the early years.

Tips for supporting this at home:

- Being attuned to your child, this means looking out for changes in body language, facial expressions, posture.
- Labelling the emotions when you see them “I think you are feeling happy”, “I think you are feeling cross”. This is called emotion labelling and is key at this stage of development.
- Using language within the home to support an understanding of emotional language. Naming emotions is the first step in helping our children to identify them. Do this as a family, emotions affect everyone, not just the child!
- Use a range of emotions e.g. happy, sad, calm.
- Using mirrors around the house to develop this understanding. Children may pull faces in the mirror whilst brushing their teeth, use this as a fun opportunity to label these emotions.
- Using books to support the development of emotional language. Bedtime reading would provide a lovely opportunity for this. Stop the book as you are reading and discuss how the character might be feeling.





Regulating Emotions

Finally, we can support our children to begin to regulate their emotions. It is so important that we remember that our children are still developing these skills in the early years, so it will still require lots of adult support: co-regulation.

When our children are functioning out of the limbic part of the brain we need to provide them with lots of opportunities to 'chill the chimp'.

Tips for supporting this at home:

- Provide your child with a cosy corner in the home that they can access when they are feeling overwhelmed. This may be a tent, a den under the bed or behind a sofa (a space that is safe). Keep in mind children will find it tricky to reason or discuss emotions when they are functioning out of this part of the brain.
- Mindfulness activities can support your child as this stage. You may want to provide your child with a box that has these resources in.
- Sensory activities e.g. messy play, resistance bands, play-do, Lego, physical activities.
- Some children can find weighted resources supportive.

Key Points to Remember:

- Emotional age and chronological age aren't always the same
- We all talk about emotions and don't just direct it at our children
- Label the range of emotions, not just angry and sad.
- Our children will need lots of support with this in the early years based on where they are developmentally.
- This is a process towards self-regulation and it can take time.